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C
Wood

Bd. Oct. 1904.

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GIFT OF

Mr. Horatio Wood

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13

MEMOIR

OF

HORATIO WOOD

BY HIS SON

Biog

Horatio Wood

MEMOIR

OF

HORATIO WOOD

FOR

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS MINISTER-AT-LARGE IN LOWELL

BY HIS SON

Horatio Wood.

C.
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1891

Gift of Mr. Horatio ...
of Lowell, Mass.

THIS brief account of my father's life was read before the Old Residents' Historical Association of Lowell, at a meeting held August 4, 1891, and has been printed in its annual pamphlet of Contributions.

The likeness facing the title page was copied by the Heliotype Printing Company of Boston from a photograph taken in 1882.

HORATIO WOOD.

LOWELL, SEPTEMBER 19, 1891.

MEMOIR.

HORATIO WOOD, son of John and Elizabeth (Smith) Wood, was born at Newburyport, Mass., Dec. 1, 1807. The father was for fifty years a prominent merchant of Newburyport, and, for several years, president of the Mechanics Bank in that city. The son was fitted for college, partly at the Newburyport Academy, but chiefly by Mr. Caleb Cushing, who was then entering upon the practice of the law and was employed by several gentlemen to give their sons a better preparation for college than could be got at the schools of the town. In the spring of 1823, I think, the boys and their tutor spent a day or two in making a little excursion to see the busy beginning of what was afterward the city of Lowell. In 1823 Mr. Wood entered the freshman class at Harvard College, graduating in 1827. Beside the excellence of the usual instruction, the college then enjoyed certain new stimulating influences. Professor Ticknor, fresh from the German universities, gave lectures on French and Spanish literature. Dr. Charles Follen, an enthusiastic teacher, gave instruction in the German language, introduced gymnastics among the students and taught them how to run long distances "with a minimum of fatigue." Mr. Wood's copious and carefully written notes of Professor Ticknor's lectures are still preserved; he was captivated by Dr. Follen, studied German, practised the gymnastic exercises vigorously and kept up through life the habit of exercising in the open air. The mode

of running he frequently used, I am sure, until after he was seventy years of age. After graduation he taught school for a year at Concord, Mass., and for another year at Newburyport. He thoroughly enjoyed the year at Concord — his school and the social advantages of the place. Among his pupils were two who afterward removed to this city: Mr. Frederic Parker, deceased, who was for a year secretary of the Board of Directors of the Ministry-at-Large while Mr. Wood was minister; and Mr. James S. Russell, whose suggestive teaching of mathematics Mr. Wood's son enjoyed in his turn.

In 1829 Mr. Wood entered the Divinity School of Harvard College. Among his classmates were Rev. A. P. Peabody, his life-long friend; Rev. Charles Babbidge of Pepperell, and Rev. Henry A. Miles, formerly of this city. His real life from 1830 to 1844 is best learned from the following account, written by him, which I found among his papers after his death. It is written in so confidential a spirit, it is so complete a revelation of his early aspirations, that I can only imagine it to have been the beginning of an article intended to be read to his brother ministers-at-large at some meeting of their association.

My mind was taken by the first movements of Rev. Dr. Tuckerman among the poorest, the most friendless, the most neglected, the most exposed to sin and ruin of our fellow-men. It struck me like the dawning of a new day for the Unitarian Church if it would be not only doctrinally, but practically, truly Christian. Rev. F. T. Gray, Rev. C. F. Barnard, Rev. J. T. Sargent, Rev. R. C. Waterston,* I saw step forward, one after another, and put their hands zealously and vigorously to the plough of Christ in the new field, and my heart went with them. On a Saturday of my

*Those named were all ministers-at-large in Boston. Dr. Tuckerman began his labor in December, 1826; Mr. Barnard in April, 1832; Mr. Gray in October, 1833; Mr. Sargent in June, 1837, and Mr. Waterston in 1840.

last collegiate year, in 1827,* I went alone and spent a day in visiting the crowded rooms, cellars and attics of Broad Street [Boston], where there was a stifled mass of degradation and woe. I let nothing escape my eyes, heard all tales, sat down and talked familiarly with many till they unburdened themselves and turned themselves inside out, letting me know all that was in their hearts. I carried away knowledge and lessons which were never to leave me.

When in the Theological School, I started a philanthropic society of inquiries into missions and other plans of benevolent operation, and sought out and invited Dr. Tuckerman to go to Cambridge and address the students on his new experience, which he did with such interest, feeling and effect that I was as clay in the hands of the potter. Soon after I took another excursion alone to the under world and visited the spirits in prison; went to the State Prison, felt interested in the Sunday School effort in behalf of the prisoners, offered my services as a teacher and asked leave of the chaplain to introduce to the charge of the vacant classes as many of brother students as might feel impelled to come; a proposition which was readily accepted. The next day, Sunday, I entered upon the work with William G. Eliot, now of St. Louis; Nathanael Hall, now of Dorchester; [Frederic W.] Holland and others; which was the beginning of a train of divinity students from Harvard, as teachers in the prison, kept up for years. On this same Saturday I also visited Lechmere Point jail, which I found without any chaplain and never visited by any brother or sister of mercy. I talked with every prisoner, male and female, felt my bowels yearn toward them and offered to the jailor my own services and that of others, undoubtedly to be procured, in Sabbath instruction to the inmates. I was referred to Sheriff Varnum of Lowell for permission, visited Lowell with Mr. Hall and readily obtained admission at any time for the purpose in view. The jail was then divided into large square cells with from one to ten drunkards, prostitutes, thieves and desperate persons in each. The plan adopted was for one student to be locked into a cell, the keeper retiring to his house, for one hour of talk and instruction with the inmates.† Generally five or six students thus employed themselves on Sabbath mornings. With some of us storms or severe cold had little power to deter from the service here or at

* He was then nineteen years old.

† At one time Mr. Wood was shut up in a cell with a single occupant who soon showed signs of insanity, and, drawing a knife, threatened to kill him. He appeared not to regard the threat and contrived, unseen by the prisoner, to throw his handkerchief out of the window. This attracted the attention of the keeper who instantly released him.

Charlestown, though the distance was from one and a half to three miles. I went myself on Sundays first to the Lechmere Point jail and from there to the State Prison; the walk and the instruction were considerable but love for the work made it easy. Thus was I born to be a minister-at-large.

In 1832, having completed the course of study at the Divinity School, I took the common round of a beginner in the ministry, preaching when invited at Portsmouth, Boston, Providence, New Bedford, etc.; but mere preaching, shifting supplies and a liability to an early settlement were not to my mind, so I decided to seek employment for a couple of years in new societies at a distance, go to work somewhat as a missionary, complete my knowledge of society in all its grades, in its country as well as city aspects, and get needed experience. At Fryeburg in Maine, but for most of the time in the two neighboring towns of Franklin and Salisbury, N. H., I labored with my might to enlighten and liberalize, and to make practical, consistent christians, where darkness, prejudice, despotic creed and resisting worldliness with ruining habits held sway.

When the two years were completed, as the two societies were not in a condition to maintain stated preaching, I left with most valuable experience and with my powers in a good working condition. I received and accepted a call to settle in Walpole, N. H., but it was too comfortable and dead a state of society to operate in to advantage in following out a missionary propensity, and in four years I withdrew from a ministerial partnership which, when once formed, I had hoped would be for life. Soon I was called to take charge of a society in Tyngsborough, near Lowell, which was in a state of transformation from Calvinism to Liberalism. There was at this time a great struggle for supremacy between four sects; but education, social life and good morals were in a low state. In this town and at Walpole the most lowly, the most ignorant and unchristian were made objects of special attention. It was not the Society and the village but those unconnected and unreached, the uncared for children and those living in the outskirts of the town, to whom sympathy and effort were particularly given.*

This course was the course of nature, of an adopted and cherished idea — and of Providence who was leading me on, though I

* One of Mr. Wood's side labors in Tyngsborough was the formation of a Tree Association, by which the common adjoining the Unitarian Church, before a dusty waste, was planted with trees and grass. The spot now adds much to the beauty of a beautiful village.

knew it not, to a large field for the action of my energies where I could be of most service to man, and accomplish a work for which, it would appear, I was best fitted.

While at Tyngsborough, after a six years' service, I was invited to take charge of the Ministry-at-Large in Lowell, just started. I leaped to go, believing it to be just the opening for me. This was in 1844.*

Even those who knew Mr. Wood best when he first came to Lowell were surprised at the skill and tact he at once displayed in dealing with the very poor, at the knowledge of right methods of alms-giving shown in his early annual reports, and at the assured manner with which he entered upon his new duties. He did not falter or feel his way, made no misstep, but went on with a swift and steady progress, retarded only by lack of means and the limitations of time and strength. The perusal of the above auto-biographical fragment dispels all wonder at his speedy success.

Before I speak in detail of Mr. Wood's work in Lowell, let me say a word of the city as he found it, and of the institution of which he was to take charge. It has been said many times that Lowell was fortunate in its founders. In the early days the chief stockholders in the mills and the resident agents employed by them were, for the most part, men of large and liberal minds, many of them college-bred. They sincerely desired that their work-people should be men and women of good

* I will give briefly the chief events of Mr. Wood's life, with dates, for the period included in his account.

He graduated from the Divinity School of Harvard College in 1832; was ordained as an evangelist at Portsmouth, N. H., Oct. 24, 1833; was settled at Walpole, N. H., from Sept. 24, 1834, to June 22, 1838; married, March 11, 1835, Miss Abby Abbot, daughter of Rev. Jacob and Catharine (Thayer) Abbot,—his friend, Rev. Andrew P. Peabody, then of Portsmouth, performing the ceremony; was settled at Tyngsborough, Mass., from October, 1838, to October, 1844; took charge of the Ministry-at-Large, Lowell, Mass., Oct. 28, 1844.

moral character, that the surroundings of the operatives should be such as to preserve their morality and increase their intelligence, and they took measures to that end.

As Dr. John O. Green once said, there was the added motive of self-interest, for the New England farmers hesitated about trusting their daughters in a manufacturing town; still there was the benevolent feeling and a sense of moral responsibility. The new town was fortunate, too, that many young men of high character, education and ability came here to find an opening in the practice of the professions of law and medicine and in the conduct of business. The influence of these men — the mill-owners, the agents and the better class of residents — gave rise to a spirit of liberality and of consideration in the treatment of the operatives which has done much for the prosperity of the city and of the manufacturing companies, and for the stability of their welfare.

But in 1844 the character of the city was undergoing a rapid change. Its prosperity and quick growth in population* had been noised abroad and a stream of poorer persons, seeking employment, was pouring in — most of them from Ireland. The manufacturing corporations were relaxing, perhaps necessarily, their previously almost parental care of the operatives. In May, 1843, several members of the Unitarian Society formed what was called the Unitarian Missionary Society. In June, 1844, this Society, impelled, probably, by the increase of poverty from immigration,† resolved to drop the word "Unitarian" from its title and to establish an

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* Population in 1830, 6,474; in 1840, 20,796; in 1850, 33,383.

† Between 1844 and 1852, inclusive, twelve ministries-at-large were organized in New England; three in Boston, making five in that city, and nine in other cities. In 1850 Mr. Wood originated the "Association of Ministers-at-Large in New England," a society which still exists and holds regular meetings.

unsectarian ministry-at-large. Dr. E. S. Gannett once said that he thought the term "ministry-at-large" originated with Dr. Tuckerman; that the name was given because the minister-at-large had the whole city for his field—the poor to relieve, the degraded to raise, the well-to-do and benevolent to bring into communication and sympathy with the poor. The Lowell Missionary Society appointed Rev. Crawford Nightingale the first minister of the new institution, who held the situation but for one month, because, upon trial, he modestly thought himself unfitted for the peculiar duties of the place. At the instigation of Rev. Henry A. Miles, pastor of the Unitarian Church, the Society invited Mr. Wood to assume the vacant position. He began his labors Oct. 28, 1844. He once defined the work of the Ministry-at-Large to be "a large intertwined work of religion, education and charity." In my necessarily brief account of his management of the institution, I shall consider it under these three heads of charity, education and religion.

During the first years of Mr. Wood's service the number of persons seeking assistance was large in proportion to the population. Laborers, chiefly Irish, were coming to the city with their families in increasing numbers and many of the most industrious had so exhausted their means in coming that they needed aid until they could obtain employment.

In 1848, especially, the number of those who really desired work and could not get it was very large and there was much suffering. Beside the able-bodied and industrious, whose passage was paid by themselves or their friends, many infirm and idle paupers were sent here, their expenses paid, from other cities, from the country towns of New England, from the alms-houses of Ireland and, in 1851, from Canada. Confronted by this

mass of poverty and beggary, Mr. Wood was compelled to adopt a method of alms-giving adapted to the limited means under his control and calculated to lessen pauperism instead of increasing it.

He always relieved extreme suffering whether there was money in the "Poor's Purse" of the Ministry-at-Large or not; that is, no one should starve or freeze if he could help it. Beyond that, he employed the means of the Ministry-at-Large only to relieve those who were temporarily disabled by sickness or other misfortune. One exception he made to this rule; he gave slight continuous assistance to some aged or infirm persons who could almost support themselves and were anxious to do their utmost to escape the alms-house. He strove to furnish the needed relief as far as possible without the expenditure of money. Sometimes the applicant had well-to-do relatives who could be shamed into doing for him; or he only needed work which could be got by inquiry; perhaps he was a member of a church able to do for him and willing if his wants were known; or he could be assisted to some other town where he might reasonably expect to do better. Still, when all these persons were disposed of, there remained two classes; the first comprising those poor by reason of idleness and vice; the second, those permanently disabled by illness or accident, and those families which had lost the earning members. For these last there was only relief from the city government and the dreaded alms-house. As to the idle and vicious, he would not see them starve, but he thought they should be well pinched into adopting better courses. Before giving anything to an applicant, unless it were a little dole of food, he made a thorough investigation into his circumstances, learned his reputation with respectable neighbors, visited his home and, if

he suspected imposture, did not hesitate minutely to examine the premises. He sometimes made ludicrous discoveries of hidden treasure — food, furniture and clothing given by the recklessly benevolent. He did not search for impostors alone, but also for those shrinking poor who suffered in secret and were ashamed to beg. In the very coldest weather he used to go rapidly through the crowded districts to see if any were without fuel. In these tours of investigation he received much information voluntarily given by those warm-hearted poor who felt for others poorer than themselves.

Mr. Wood's unwillingness to assist the undeserving frequently brought him, at first, into conflict with the well-to-do and benevolent. It must be remembered that in 1844, most New Englanders had seen little of real or feigned poverty and did not know how to deal with it. They made a feeble resistance, if any, to the fluent beggar with his tale of woe and exaggerated expressions of gratitude. The city then swarmed with beggars running from door to door; ladies gave freely and reported the cases to Mr. Wood. When he refused to give aid they were indignant and thought him hard hearted, but, after being repeatedly duped, they learned to have confidence in his judgment and resolved to give only through him. In a few years he was able to say, in one of his reports, that street beggary had almost entirely ceased.

During Mr. Wood's twenty-four years of service as minister-at-large there were at least five periods when there was unusual suffering from poverty: from 1846 to 1848, owing to an excessive immigration; in 1850–51, a time of depression in manufacturing when the mills were partly closed; during the commercial crisis of 1857–58; at the beginning of the War, and at its close.

In 1857, the stoppage of business, the lack of employment and the consequent poverty were general, but the unusual efforts made by citizens to raise funds for charitable uses went far to meet the difficulty. Early in the War a majority of the manufacturing companies closed their mills, some even selling out their supplies of cotton; their action at that time formed a marked exception to their usual consideration for the welfare of the operatives which it is not pleasant to recall. A more unselfish policy would have been as much to the advantage of the mills as to that of the work-people they employed. There was then a good deal of suffering and Mr. Wood found it very hard to get money to relieve it. Matters grew much worse toward the close of the War in consequence of a rise in the prices of food and clothing, much more rapid than the rise in wages. He says in his report for the year ending in October, 1864: "In the cotton-manufacturing district of Lowell, the wearing of cotton cloth was entirely abandoned by not a few. . . . I have never known so many people to live so low. Some came down to two meals a day, others to only one." One who well remembers that time said to me recently: "Women and children came in early winter to the office of the Ministry-at-Large wearing but one thin garment with no underclothing. I stripped our house of all we could spare, and was obliged to buy poor cotton cloth for the Ministry at fifty cents a yard. At the sewing school we made undergarments from the fragments discarded by societies working for the soldiers." This was almost the only time that Mr. Wood had the pain of seeing extreme suffering which he could not relieve. He spent all he dared in excess of the charity fund at his disposal and found it almost impossible to obtain money from citizens. Their purses and

their generosity had been exhausted to furnish supplies for the Sanitary Commission, for soldiers, sailors and their families. But, while worthy poor were barely kept alive, impostors were posing as soldiers' widows with success.

The sum of money expended each year by the Ministry-at-Large for charitable purposes was called the Poor's Purse; it was at Mr. Wood's disposal and he had to account for it. He was obliged, especially in the earlier years, to raise a good part of it himself, and by every possible device. He organized courses of lectures; when people got tired of these, he had, for several years, floral sales on the Fourth of July, and a great labor they were for him and for Mrs. Wood; later he arranged promenade concerts. During the latter half of his term of service more money came in of itself and he had less labor; still the furnishing of the Poor's Purse was always a source of care and anxiety.

When Mr. Wood began his ministry in 1844, he found here an unusual degree not only of poverty but of ignorance. A large proportion of the Irish immigrants were unable to read and write. Two months after his arrival in the city he opened an evening school on two evenings a week at the Free Chapel on Middlesex Street; the third school of the kind in New England. The inconvenience of the place for the purpose was enough to have deterred most men from the undertaking. The Ministry-at-Large had then the use only of the second story of the building; this story contained the audience-room and two small dark closets. All the materials of instruction had to be packed into these closets and brought out again weekly. He says in one of his reports: "The starting of the school necessitated much personal solicitation and expla-

nation.* One evening I managed to gain admission to a theatre of wild and ignorant boys in Belvidere and persuaded them all to drop their theatre and join our school, which they did the next school night. The school in one month numbered two hundred scholars, male and female." † In after years he advertised his schools by posters, placed about the streets and in the mills. In 1846, or early in 1847, the Ministry-at-Large was enabled to hire the whole of the Free Chapel building so that the school had better accommodations and the attendance was much increased. For several seasons both stories and the basement were occupied by the school.

In January, 1853, Mr. Wood opened two other evening schools; one at the Howard Chapel in Centralville; the other at the Suffolk Street Hall, in a region densely populated by Irish. The Centralville school was carried on only for two years as Mr. Wood found the labor too great in addition to all his other duties. In 1853 there were in all the schools 756 pupils from twelve to sixty years of age; in 1855, 1,000 pupils; in 1857, 1,200 pupils and sixty-eight teachers. These numbers include all those whose names were registered. Usually about three-fourths of those registered came long enough to be called attending scholars. Those who failed to continue their attendance were chiefly women who, probably, became discouraged by the rigor of the season. The whole number of pupils was about equally divided between the sexes. In the Suffolk Street school there was usually more young men; in the Middlesex Street school, more young women. None were admitted who attended the public schools. At first none were received

* To obtain teachers and pupils. He had also to make it understood that no religious instruction would be given.

† Mrs. Wood acted as principal of the female department of the Middlesex Street school for the greater part of the twenty-four years it was carried on.

under twelve years of age; soon the age of admission was raised to fourteen, and later to fifteen years. There was always a goodly number of pupils over twenty years of age, and always some over thirty. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were the branches chiefly taught. For several years the privilege of taking books from the City Library, then not a free library, was given at the close of each season to the most meritorious scholars. The greater part of the pupils were employed in the mills. On one corporation, the Hamilton, where especial effort was made to induce the operatives to attend the evening school, the number of those unable to sign their names was reduced in three years from three hundred to thirty. The eagerness of the young people to avail themselves of this chance to learn, and the determination which brought them out in spite of fatigue and wintry weather were most gratifying. It was most interesting to observe the older scholars, those who came at twenty, thirty, forty years of age to learn to read and write. I can see them now as they sat laboring over their hard and novel task and striving to overcome the drowsiness induced by fatigue and the heat of the crowded room. Many of adult age acquired a knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic which enabled them to obtain permanent employment in place of uncertain day labor. In after years Mr. Wood was not unfrequently accosted by those who wished to thank him for the instruction received in the evening school which had given them a better position in life. Then was he paid for his labor. None of the teachers were paid; all gave their services, many for two, three years or more. Some were teachers in the public schools, and the majority labored in some way during the day. A few became so interested in their scholars as to continue

the instruction after the schools had closed for the season.

Mr. Wood organized the schools, procured the teachers, the materials for instruction, and through his influence and efforts the money was obtained to defray the expenses. He was the acting head of each school. Many of the pupils were unused to discipline or control; although most of them were restrained by their desire to learn, still a few were disposed to make disturbance. Mr. Wood always had a policeman at the outer door to keep roughs away from the entrance, but he never called the man inside to assist him in maintaining order, as he thought it would lessen his authority to do so. If a pupil was disorderly, he was quick to detect the offender and ordered him to leave the school for the evening. If the boy refused to go and clung to his chair, Mr. Wood put him out at once. Although a small man, he had much muscular strength and never feared that he should not accomplish what he undertook. When a pupil was repeatedly disorderly, he was expelled from the school for the season, but this extreme step was seldom necessary. When the Suffolk Street school was begun, it was feared by those influential in that region that, not simply an educational, but a religious invasion of their district was attempted. A strong feeling of opposition to the school was excited, and one evening, when this feeling was at its height, the attending policeman was absent by some mistake. Mr. Wood saw the hall-way filling with roughs; there were disorderly cries in the school, and riotous proceedings seemed imminent. He went into the entry, seized the ringleader by the collar, pulled him over backwards, dragged him down the stairs, his heels clattering from step to step, and dropped him on the sidewalk. The other intruders left the entry at Mr.

Wood's order, the disturbance in the school-room was quelled, and, for six years, a most successful school was kept at that place.

These evening schools were free in much the same sense that the public schools were then free — that is, the pupils bought their books and paid a small fee, ten or fifteen cents, for the use of stationery. The schools were most economically carried on; the cost of conducting them amounting to about fifty cents for each pupil for the season of four or five months. At first the expenses were paid chiefly from the slender Poor's Purse, but, in 1851, the School Committee of Lowell appropriated fifty dollars for the support of the Middlesex Street school; this appropriation was increased upon the establishment of the other schools, and, in 1855, it amounted to five hundred dollars. In 1859 the City assumed the management of the evening schools, and Mr. Wood was relieved from excessive labor almost beyond his strength. Still he continued his school at the Free Chapel on Middlesex Street, raising the age of admission to sixteen years and offering instruction in higher branches — for instance, book-keeping and mechanical drawing. He found that the elder pupils preferred his school where they did not have to associate with those much younger than themselves. During the twenty-four years he estimated that more than twelve thousand pupils attended his schools, and during that time he was absent but one evening, to attend the funeral of his mother.*

For about twenty years a sewing school was con-

*On June 29, 1891, after Mr. Wood's death, the School Committee of Lowell passed unanimously a series of resolutions recognizing him as the founder of evening schools in Lowell, and expressing their appreciation of "the philanthropic spirit that inspired him and his faithful band of assistant teachers to freely give their services" in instructing the illiterate of the city.

ducted at the Free Chapel on Wednesday afternoons during the colder part of the year, which was under the charge of Mrs. Wood and was attended by from eighty to two hundred girls, the greater part of them of foreign parentage.

Mr. Wood's efforts in behalf of religion were less prominent than his educational and charitable labors for several reasons. At first many persons supposed the establishment of the Ministry-at-Large to be a masked attempt to organize a second Unitarian Society; a supposition not unreasonable as a few Unitarians then desired that issue. Unless Mr. Wood could allay this prejudice, his usefulness as minister-at-large would speedily end, especially as he had to deal largely with Catholics, a sect peculiarly sensitive to religious interference. By exercising the utmost caution and by keeping himself entirely free from affiliation with any sect, he was most successful in overcoming the difficulty, and with a rapidity that seems remarkable as we look back upon it; in a few years he had the assistance, in money or service, of persons of every sect. He was well aware, too, that any reference to religious subjects only repelled the most degraded, and those he most desired to lead a step forward. Charity, physical aid, he once called the "entering wedge;" then came secular and moral instruction; finally, the inculcation of religious faith and feeling. It was the more difficult to induce the poor to attend the Sunday services because they wished on that day to rest, to enjoy the open air or to avail themselves of the opportunity to do many things which they could not do during the week. The attendance on the Sunday services was not large, varying from seventy to two hundred persons. Mr. Wood never solicited the presence of those connected with other churches, but of those

who went to no church, and many of them he had to supply with suitable clothing to enable them to come. His preaching was never doctrinal, but of a plain and practical nature. Beside conducting the services at the Free Chapel, he acted as chaplain at the Poor Farm for six years, beginning with 1851; then at the Jail for two years; introducing into each, for the first time, religious services which have continued to the present day.

Mr. Wood made the strongest effort to attract and influence the young; but never admitted any children to his Sunday School who attended the schools of other churches. At the conclusion of the morning service, the children remained for a few moments to receive each a juvenile paper; in the afternoon, during the warmer months, he distributed among them flowers gathered in his own garden. The Sunday School, which he superintended, was held at the conclusion of the afternoon service. It opened in 1844 with four scholars, had in two years one hundred and fifty registered scholars, and in after years from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty. For the enjoyment of the children there were the Fruit Festival in the autumn, the Christmas celebration with its tree of gifts, and on the evening of Washington's birthday, and at other times during the winter, social gatherings at which the children were taught to amuse themselves in a free but orderly manner. Mr. Wood collected two small libraries for the children,—one of religious books distributed on Sunday, and one of miscellaneous books given out during the week. Some persons, both young and old, attended the religious exercises of the Ministry-at-Large for years, but for many the Free Chapel was a temporary, rather than a permanent, resort. A few, as their condition in life improved, naturally preferred some other place of worship, but many were drawn away

by other churches, which found it easier to replenish their congregations and Sunday Schools from the Chapel than to scour the streets as Mr. Wood did.

For the first two years he had the use only of the upper story of the Chapel building, and suffered much inconvenience for want of room. In 1846 the directors were enabled to hire the whole building. School-rooms and a storage-room were arranged in the basement; on the ground floor were a school-room, an office where applicants for aid were received at stated hours, and a room where clothing was kept for distribution. In April, 1863, Mr. Wood learned that the Hamilton and Appleton Corporations meditated selling the building. He instantly secured the refusal of it at a price generously low, quickly raised the money from a few persons, and bought the building. The property was conveyed to five trustees by a deed specifying that it should be used for religious, educational, and charitable purposes; that the management should be entirely unsectarian, and that the seats in the Chapel should be free.

I have already spoken of the "Poor's Purse," that portion of the annual receipts expended by Mr. Wood, chiefly in charity. The other expenses of the institution were paid from what was called the "General Fund," a sum at first given mostly by members of the Unitarian Society. In 1846, at the suggestion, and largely through the influence, of Mr. John Clark, the manufacturing corporations consented to give six hundred dollars, on condition that the like sum should first be contributed by citizens. In 1857, at the solicitation of Mr. Wood, the corporations increased their annual gift to one thousand dollars on the same conditions. Without this generosity of the corporations the usefulness of the Ministry-at-Large would have been greatly abridged, if, indeed, its

existence could have been maintained. The sum contributed by citizens was given by individuals of every religious sect, who pledged each an annual sum. This list of subscribers to the General Fund was a remarkably stable one. A little effort, from time to time, on the part of Mr. Wood and of others, kept the list full. Only once or twice, and then at times of unusual distress, was the management of the Ministry-at-Large obliged to make any public appeal for money.

Mr. Wood read every year to the Lowell Missionary Society a report of his operations for the preceding twelve months, which was printed and widely distributed. While the greater part of each report was taken up in giving a detailed account of the condition of the Ministry-at-Large and of his labors in its several departments, a few pages were always devoted to the treatment of some special subject, such as the causes of poverty, the methods of relieving it, the dwellings of the poor, the hours of labor, the effect of immigration upon the welfare of the city, the right treatment of vicious youth, etc. These general reflections attracted much attention to his reports, and he was often asked for copies by persons living in this and other countries who were interested in the solution of social problems.

He also availed himself of his report to introduce to the attention of the citizens of Lowell whatever new undertaking he thought the time demanded. To such suggestions, supplemented by some effort on his part, are owing the establishment of the City Reform School, the appointment of a Truant Commissioner by the city, and the organization of the Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank. I doubt if the Reform School ever took the shape he desired. At any rate he afterward came to the opinion that the majority of youthful offenders would do

better if they could be placed, singly, in respectable homes in the country. He said: "Very seldom is juvenile depravity so deep as it appears to be. It needs only separation from evil and subjection to good influences to work gradually, and sometimes speedily, out of the system." The Five Cent Savings Bank began operations in June, 1854. Mr. Wood was chosen its first president, and held the office until he resigned it in January, 1885, in consequence of physical disability.

Any account of Mr. Wood's conduct of the Ministry-at-Large would be incomplete which did not mention the valuable assistance he received from Mrs. Wood. In his last report as Minister he says: "Justice requires that the record should be made on these pages that Mrs. Wood in the evening school, in the sewing school, in the Sunday School, in the choir, in the clothing and library departments, has rendered constant service; her head, heart and hands have contributed materially to the results in which we all rejoice." It is but just to add that this constant service, which at times severely taxed her strength, was freely given without other compensation than the satisfaction of performing it.

During twenty-four years of service as Minister-at-Large, Mr. Wood labored to the extent of his strength, and at one period, from 1853 to 1859, beyond what was wise. In those years his week began with three services on Sunday beside the superintendence of his Sunday School. During the rest of the week he began his day by going to his office at eight o'clock to receive applicants for aid. The rest of the day was taken up with visiting, and in the evening came the schools from which he returned home at ten o'clock too excited to sleep. Beside these regular duties there was always some exceptional call upon his time and strength, and, under-

lying all, was the almost constant anxiety: "How shall I replenish my Poor's Purse." Even his iron constitution could never have endured the strain, were it not that his work was lighter in the warmer part of the year when he refreshed himself by the cultivation of his garden or by a summer journey. As it was he broke down three times: once from lameness caused by excessive walking; twice he was threatened with organic disease and was forced to rest for a month or two.

In 1868, after a long period of distress among the poor, the city became more prosperous and Mr. Wood's labor and care were somewhat lightened. He could contemplate with satisfaction the condition of the Ministry-at-Large. That institution, which at his coming he found poorly housed and without form, now owned its building; its usefulness was generally acknowledged, and its hold upon the regard of the citizens of Lowell was strong. Its resources had lately been increased by two funds, the Dalton and the Holbrook funds, of about five hundred dollars each, of which the interest was to be spent in aiding the poor. He had recently, under pledge of secrecy, been consulted by a wealthy resident of Lowell as to a provision in his will by which the income of the Ministry-at-Large would probably be largely augmented.* He looked forward to having an assistant and to carrying out long-cherished plans of benevolent action which lack of means had hitherto hindered his adopting. These pleasing anticipations were not to be realized.

* Mr. Thomas Nesmith, who died in 1870, left twenty-five thousand dollars to the City of Lowell on condition that the city should agree to pay annually six per cent. of that sum to certain trustees, under whose direction the income should be expended for the relief of the poor of Lowell. Without binding the trustees to any particular course of action, he expressed the wish that they should commit the income to the "Ministry-at-Large for distribution, especially so while the Rev. Horatio Wood, the present Minister-at Large, shall occupy and fill said office, . . . having great confidence in the present operations of said Ministry-at-Large and in the distribution, etc."

In September, 1868, the Board of Directors took such action, or rather came to such a determination, as to leave Mr. Wood, in his opinion, no course but to give up his office. With great reluctance he sent in his resignation, which took effect Dec. 31, 1868. Although he said little of it, his retirement from the Ministry-at-Large gave him great pain; how intense I never knew until since his death. His love for the institution and his desire for its prosperity were never diminished.

Before leaving the subject of the Ministry-at-Large, I beg to be excused if I add a word, which I should not venture to utter if it were merely to give expression to my own opinion. The function of the Ministry-at-Large has been somewhat misconceived. It has been too commonly supposed that it is simply a charitable association. This limited view of its scope has at times been held by persons concerned in its management, perhaps to its disadvantage. If Mr. Wood had made himself a mere routine almoner, the institution would never have attained its present prominence, or have enjoyed its present prosperity. He defined its work to be an "intertwined work of religion, education, and charity"; he believed the final object of that work to be the social, intellectual, and spiritual elevation of men and women, especially of the most degraded. The institution, while well provided with funds for the relief of poverty, now needs the means of performing more fully its higher duties. But, however ample the means of the Ministry-at-Large, the extent of its usefulness must depend largely upon the character of its minister, in whom should be found the qualities, not often combined, of force, sensibility, discretion, and zeal. When a man of these qualities is secured, let those whose duty it is see that his hands are strengthened and that he is not disheartened by personal care.

In 1869 Mr. Wood found himself without occupation. He hoped, probably, to find some employment of a philanthropic nature for which he was peculiarly fitted by his experience and personal qualities, but such positions are not common. He was now sixty-one years of age and could not easily adopt an entirely novel occupation. Indeed he felt unfitted, as well as disinclined, for the performance of the usual duties of a parish minister. But if remunerative labor is sometimes hard to find, there is always in every community enough good work to be done by those who will do it gratuitously.

In 1874, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Wood became interested in the People's Club of Lowell. This institution did not originate with him, as some newspapers stated at the time of his death. In 1872, at the instigation of Col. James Francis and Mr. Samuel Cabot, Jr., a meeting of prominent citizens was called to consider a plan for affording a place of innocent resort for those young persons who spent their evenings in walking the streets. A society was organized, rooms were hired, one for a reading-room, the other for an amusement and lecture-room, and the People's Club went into successful operation at once. At first men and women were admitted to the rooms, but the women soon ceased to come and it was decided to admit only men. When Mr. Wood became connected with the Club in 1874, its affairs were somewhat less flourishing than at first, chiefly because the young men who originated it, having their careers before them, were unable to afford the time its successful working required. But soon after Mr. Wood began to devote himself to its interests, the Club revived and the greater part of its management gradually fell into his hands. He procured the lecturers, the periodicals for the reading-room, the books for its library, and,

greatest labor of all, the money needed to carry it on. A portion of the money was given by annual subscriptions secured by Mr. Wood, but rather the larger part came from the liberality of the manufacturing corporations at his solicitation.*

In 1878 a women's branch of the People's Club was opened in the Wyman's Exchange, on the corner of Merrimack and Central Streets. Two large rooms were rented and attractively furnished,— one for a reading-room, the other for an amusement and lecture-room. Entertaining and instructive lectures were secured by Mr. Wood at the expenditure of much time and labor. These were given every other Saturday evening; on the alternate evenings musical entertainments were provided, partly by him, but chiefly by an efficient committee of ladies. He discovered, somewhat unexpectedly, that it is more difficult, though it is perhaps even more desirable, to attract young women to the Club than young men. Of late years classes in various kinds of needle-work have been formed, which have done much to increase the attendance. Mr. Wood took great pleasure in the conduct of the Club. Every evening found him at the rooms, a happy observer when they were full.†

So far as Mr. Wood had to do with the expenditure of money for the several institutions with which he was

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*Mr. Wood wrote in October, 1875: "The manufacturing corporations have just voted an appropriation for the People's Club. This act is in accordance with their considerate regard, from the first starting of the mills, for the spiritual, temporal, intellectual, and moral good of those in their employ, as evinced, formerly in grants to struggling churches, now to the Hospital, to the Ministry-at-Large, and to the Mechanics' Association. This has been wisdom and kindness, and has found its reward in the better lives and hearts of the operatives, with which Providence has closely connected material gain."

† Want of space will not permit me to give the names of many who have given much time to the interests of the People's Club, but I cannot refrain from mentioning Mr. James Watson, who has been its secretary from the beginning, who gave Mr. Wood valuable assistance, and who, for the last seven years, has taken his place in its management.

connected, it is noticeable how much he accomplished in proportion to the sums used. He seldom had much left over at the end of the year, for he was strongly of the opinion that charitable institutions which depend upon popular favor thrive, not by saving, but by efficient spending; that for them to save money, is to lose it. He kept the credit of his institutions good by always paying bills on the quarter-day. He was never asked for money due, but he often dunned tradesmen for their bills. In the disbursement of the Poor's Purse of the Ministry-at-Large, his expenditures several times exceeded the receipts, but only at times of unusual distress, and, even then, he never allowed the deficit to exceed what he knew he could himself obtain in a more prosperous time. Whenever the end of the year disclosed a deficiency, he was always, I am very sure, the only creditor unpaid.

His personal expenditure was always limited to his means. In his devotion to the interests of the Ministry-at-Large, his own affairs sometimes suffered, but never to others' loss. I have known him, when the payment of his salary lagged, to borrow on his own note the means of paying the very few personal bills he ever allowed to run. He once told me that early in life, when his secret desire to serve his fellow-men had probably already become strong, he had made up his mind that he should never have abundant means, and that the lack should never trouble him. This attitude he maintained in spite, I believe, of an inherited tendency to acquisitiveness.

He was very successful in obtaining the means for promoting his plans, whether he was asking for money or for personal service. I do not think he ever importuned and he was certainly very sensitive to any chilling rebuff. He really believed that he was doing a person

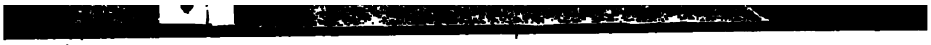
a favor in giving him an opportunity to do good, and the result usually confirmed his belief. Hardly any undertaking of his failed, and this almost uniform success was due chiefly to his quick perception of an opportunity, his energy in seizing it before it escaped him and to his intimate knowledge of human nature. He seemed to know intuitively what would attract and what would repel those whom he wished to bring under better influences. He did not underrate his fellow-men, but often said, toward the end of his life, that his acquaintance with the most vicious men and women had only convinced him of the fundamental excellence of human nature. He believed there was no person so bad that he could not be influenced for good, if one went the right way to work and found the tender spot in his character. His respect for human nature was further shown in his bearing. There was absolutely no difference in his treatment of high or low. He was always kindly, never lost command of himself, was never familiar, and uniformly exhibited a simple dignity which inspired respect.

In the spring of 1884 he suffered a stroke of paralysis which impaired his power of motion, and, in a greater degree, his ability to speak. At first he struggled against the disease with all his force of will, but, finding the contest vain, he reconciled himself to his state, and, until the day of his death, May 12, 1891, maintained, to the surprise of all who knew his active temperament, a calm and cheerful existence. It was characteristic of him that, during this time, his pecuniary affairs gave him no concern, but the growth of his garden, the progress of the seasons, news about old friends, any tidings of the Ministry-at-Large, or, more particularly, of the People's Club, his latest care, always interested him. In the last

winter of his life he insisted upon visiting the People's Club ten or eleven times, toiling up the long stairs to the men's or the women's branch. It was at these visits that his face, somewhat dulled by age and disease, wore its most animated expression.

His life was a very happy one; he often said that he would like to live it over again; but his happiness and his success were greatly owing to the wise, sympathetic and cheerful companionship he enjoyed for fifty-six years.

In my account of Mr. Wood's philanthropic work in this city, I have said, perhaps, too little of the generous assistance he received in all his undertakings from very many noble-hearted men and women,—assistance essential to the accomplishment of his plans, and fully appreciated by him. If I were to dedicate this sketch of my father's life, it should be inscribed in gratitude to those corporations and to those individuals who gave him encouragement, money, or self-denying service.



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